

MICROPROJECTS UNIT



Republic of Zambia

MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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2001 GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. INTRODUCTION

The **Microprojects Unit (MPU)** was created by the Government of Zambia in order to redress problems faced by the poor and to cushion the impact of the economic adjustment programme. The **MPU** aims to improve the availability of services at a time of severe budget constraints by providing financial support to community managed projects.

Community based projects eligible for support from the **MPU** include community managed water and sanitation, community roads, conservation of the environment, economic infrastructure, nutrition and food security, primary education, primary health care, revolving funds for income generation and training. Participation by women is actively encouraged. There is a strong emphasis on: rehabilitation of existing basic infrastructure.

The **MPU** operates as an autonomous unit within the Economic Development and Budget Division (EDBD), Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. Its head office is in Lusaka and it has regional offices in each of the nine provincial headquarters.

The **MPU** is currently supported by two European Development Fund (EDF) Grant Aided programmes. These are the Microprojects Programme (MPP) and the Zambia Education Capacity Building Programme (ZECAB). It was started in 1985 by the European Union funded **Microprojects Programme (MPP)**. The GRZ/World Bank **Social Recovery Project (SRP)** joined the MPP in 1991 and the **Microprojects Unit (MPU)** was formed. In June 2000, the GRZ/World Bank supported SRP came to a close and paved way for the Zambia Social Investment Fund (ZAMSIF), a separate programme from the **MPU**. However, **MPU** and ZAMSIF have continued to work in collaboration and uses common staff country-wide.

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2 Principles of MPU

The MPU responds to **community initiatives and demand**. The communities themselves analyse their problems, make decisions, plan, gather resources, organise themselves, implement, manage, complete and maintain their own projects. By being involved in decision making, communities feel more capable and responsible. The sense of ownership is enhanced and the likelihood of maintenance and sustainability improved. The MPU supports this process of community managed development.

Generally, the MPU funds proposals for community based projects which:

- meet a priority need for the majority of the community applying for the project;
- benefit the poor and vulnerable groups, especially women;
- are initiated, planned and managed by a community-based group. NGO's, Government departments and district councils do not themselves apply but support and facilitate community initiatives;
- provide evidence that the majority of the community and future beneficiaries are fully committed to the initiative;
- contain a local community participation component of at least 25 % of the total project costs;
- demonstrate that they can be successfully completed within one year i.e. be simple enough to be implemented without significant technical assistance from outside the community;
- demonstrate that maintenance is ongoing on existing infrastructure and is guaranteed for the future;
- have been discussed and reviewed, appraised and recommended by a Technical Team of District Officers which includes District Council representatives, District line departments as well as Provincial Planning Units (PPU) and MPU staff;
- require financial support from the MPU not in excess of Euro 300,000. The typical MPU contribution per project, however, is around Euro 50,000.

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3. GRZ/MPU POLICY AND PRIORITIES

Priorities for MPU funding reflect the government policies of the respective sector ministries. Relevant sector district staff to ensure that the sector policy is followed reviews all project proposals.

Projects, which address the problems faced by the poorest members of society, especially women, are a priority.

In general, the construction of completely new facilities is discouraged. Preference is given to rehabilitation and expansion of existing facilities.

The MPU does **not** fund recurrent costs. The MPU does **not** fund construction or rehabilitation of any infrastructure for privately owned institutions or businesses.

3.1 COMMUNITY ROADS *

Priority is given to community managed roads using labour based methods.

Roads should lead to basic services, (school, clinic, water point, court house), another village or to passable feeder road. The road should improve access to production and markets and increase public transport possibilities.

Earth roads, drainage, bridges, foot bridges, culverts, causeways, drifts and splashes may be funded.

3.2 ECONOMIC and OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

Priority is given to community-based and managed economic and other social infrastructure.

Some examples are:

Rehabilitation, expansion and construction of markets

Construction and Rehabilitation of community managed post offices

Construction and Rehabilitation of traditional court houses

Construction and Rehabilitation of community managed police posts.

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3.3 ENVIRONMENT*

Priority is given to community based projects which address the environment including :

- income generating activities which use natural resources in an efficient, sustainable and environmentally sound way;
- community based projects which control soil degradation;
- community based projects which address deforestation;
- community based projects which control air and water pollution;
- community based projects which improve sanitation;
- community based projects which aim to preserve wildlife; and
- short training courses on any of the above.

3.4 EDUCATION SECTOR

Priority is given to primary education.

Rehabilitation, Expansion and Improvement of existing Primary and Community Schools, including water, sanitation, furniture and staff houses. Rehabilitation, expansion and improvement of Vocational Training facilities for school leavers.

3.5 HEALTH SECTOR

Priority is given to primary health care.

Rehabilitation and Expansion of existing Health Centres including water and sanitation and necessary furniture and equipment.

Construction of Staff houses and Relative's Shelters for Health Centres;

Rehabilitation and Construction of Mortuaries;

Rehabilitation of District or Mission Hospitals and Nutrition Training Centres.

3.6 INCOME GENERATION, REVOLVING FUND, SAVINGS and CREDIT SCHEMES*

which are community based, have a savings and training component, provide credit to the poorer members of society unable to access credit. Usually Savings and Credit programmes are applied for through a recognised Financial Intermediary acting on behalf of communities. However, community groups and co-operatives can also apply through the districts.

* Specific guidelines available on request

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3.7 NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY

Rehabilitation and expansion of communal irrigation systems for small-scale farmers
Rehabilitation and construction of community based storage sheds
Cattle clubs using sprays (not dip tanks).^{*}
Community cattle water points.

3.8 TRAINING*

The MPU funds skills training which are community based, meet a priority need for the participating community, discrete length of time (about 10 days), where the trainers are well qualified to train and the subject matter and the training curriculum meets GRZ and MPU priorities.

3.9 WATER AND SANITATION SECTOR

Priority is given to community based and managed water and sanitation facilities.

Construction, installation and rehabilitation of protected wells and boreholes with hand pumps;

Rehabilitation or extension of communal piped water supplies; Construction of Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines; Rehabilitation, expansion and construction of water supply and sanitation systems for primary and secondary schools, health centres and other community based institutions;

4. MPU ASSISTED PROJECT CYCLE and PROCEDURES

There are three phases of the project cycle:

- community preparation
- selection
- implementation.

Maintenance should go on before, during the project and after the project is completed.

4.1 COMMUNITY PREPARATION - Project Identification and Application

^{*} Specific Guidelines Available on Request.

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Communities themselves should identify projects following an examination of community problems. Projects should present solutions to identified priority problems. Applications to the MPU should only be made for projects, which show evidence of widespread support within the community. The community should be prepared to provide a significant self-help contribution and should have **already started contributing** before making an application and have made a plan on how to contribute the balance required. Projects with adequate up-front self-help contribution already provided on site at the time of application stand a higher chance of approval. The community should also show that it is committed to maintenance and has a maintenance strategy, committee and fund in place.

Printed **application forms** are available from Provincial Planning Units, District Councils, District Planning Offices and the MPU Regional Offices. Completed project applications should be submitted to the District Planning Officer or relevant District Line Department and the MPU Regional Office. Communities applying for projects are strongly advised to seek information and advice from District Officers before filling in the forms. The District Officers have been trained by the MPU to assist communities in all aspects of the project cycle.

Communities are advised not to present a long list of requirements. It should be remembered that a community contribution of 25% of the total project costs will be expected. Thus the more a community asks for, the more it must contribute itself.

The MPU application form represents a project proposal. Each proposal should contain the following information:

- location, (village and approximate distance in km from District Centre) physical description (rehabilitation, construction, training), sector and intended size of project (targets);
- statement of benefits (improved learning conditions, improved literacy);
- numbers of beneficiaries and who will benefit;
- justification of the project (state of existing infrastructure, why the project should be considered);
- statement of need and indication of priority, (extent of problem, community meetings held);
- community willingness to participate, (how much has already been done, how much more community prepared to contribute, what their experience has been with self help, women's participation);
- community organisation;
- what maintenance has been done, who is responsible, how much money they have collected specifically for maintenance, what work has been done.

4.2 PROJECT SELECTION

Project selection involves desk appraisal, field appraisal, MPU appraisal and Steering Committee approval.

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4.2.1 DESK APPRAISAL

Every quarter, a **Desk Appraisal Meeting** is held by the **District Desk Appraisal Committee (DDAC)** comprising of senior district council and line department staff. Progress of ongoing projects is discussed, District monitoring visits and follow ups on problems from the last quarter are reported and new projects are selected. At this meeting, project applications are discussed to select the best proposals where communities are ready to implement their projects.

Each application is appraised by discussing the following five criteria.

A National, Sector and District Priorities

Only communities applying for projects, which **follow** GRZ national and sector policies are assisted.

Rehabilitation, completion and extension of existing infrastructure takes priority over construction of completely new infrastructure. Construction of completely new institutions where nothing exists is rejected, because of the extra recurrent costs involved to provide the services. If there is a district sector plan, (e.g. health) then the project must be part of the plan. The Desk Appraisal Committee members should be certain that the relevant sector department guarantees to provide the proposed project the necessary staff and materials to service the infrastructure. The District Team (DT) should also be aware of the District Plan and the priorities of different areas within the district. If the District staff are aware that more than one donor or NGO is also involved with the community applying for the project, then the project is rejected until their involvement ceases.

B Community Priority Need, Commitments to the Project, Existing Self Reliance

If a proposed project represents a priority need of the community, the community will be committed to the project. Where the community is committed it is likely that they would have **already started to work** on the project and are more likely to participate willingly and to subsequently maintain the completed project. If the community are not committed then the project will not be successful, it is unlikely to be efficiently implemented nor will it finish on time. Further, the benefits will not accrue to the community and such a project will merely waste both Government's and the community's scarce resources.

The Desk Appraisal members assess whether the proposed project addresses a priority need for the majority of the community applying for the project, whether the community is committed, and whether the community has a sense of self reliance. The following indicators are used:

- local knowledge of District Appraisal team members;
- minutes of community meetings, showing election of committee, discussion of project application etc., signed attendance lists, women's involvement;
- committees organised and women's involvement in management (Project committee, Maintenance committee);

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- any other project the community has successfully completed in the past to help themselves;
- what the community has **ALREADY** done towards **THIS** project, (up front). The quantities should be compared with the assistance being asked for;
- what the community intend to do towards the project, (pledged).

If the up front community contribution is small compared to the size of the project, but otherwise the community seems to be committed, the DT members should advise the community to prioritise their needs and reapply. They may need assistance with this. Where there is no or very little up front contribution, no evidence of meetings, community organisation nor self reliance, the project proposal is rejected and the community advised that they should reapply when they have prepared themselves.

C Benefits and Beneficiaries

The proposed project must have tangible benefits which will benefit the poor and vulnerable. The District Appraisal Committee members assess both the likely benefits and who will benefit from the project.

Examples of likely benefits of a **community road** project might be improved input supply and access to marketing for farmers, easier access to social facilities especially for women. The benefits accruing to a **health** project are likely to be improved access to health services, improved services, shorter distances to nearest facility, qualified staff etc. The beneficiaries will be the population served by the health centre, especially women and children if maternity and under 5 services are to be improved. For a primary **education** project the benefits could be improved learning environment, improved access to education, better quality teachers and so on. The beneficiaries will be the number of primary school children served by the school.

Communities living in the more remote parts of rural Zambia have been identified as particularly vulnerable. Female headed households, orphans, the aged are also amongst the most vulnerable. Projects, which target these groups, are a priority for the district. Projects, which benefit the better off (for example private paying schools), are rejected. Projects, which only benefit a few individuals, are also rejected.

D Costs, Size and Simplicity of the Project and the Community Capacity

Projects assisted by the MPU are community managed projects. **The community must therefore be able to plan, implement, manage, complete and maintain the project.** The Desk Appraisal Committee discusses the capacity of the community to manage what they have applied for. The critical issues when assessing the capacity are the following:

- **how long will the project take.** The MPU aim for projects to complete within one year. Most complete within 18 months. If a project takes longer, the community loses interest and fail to participate, the committee feels overburdened, problems become too many and the expected outcomes are not achieved.

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- **size and costs of the project:** if the project is large and has too many targets, it is more likely to take longer and may be too complicated for a community to manage in one year. Project should include essential facilities, such as water and sanitation, furniture and equipment. The average cost of a MPU assisted microproject is about Euro 50,000. Any thing more than this could cause problems for a community managed project. The Desk Appraisal Committee also assess whether the project is cost effective - is it worth spending this amount of money to achieve the intended benefits? Is there a more cost effective option?
- **simplicity:** The project must be technically simple enough for the community to implement on its own. The Desk Appraisal Team asks whether the community have access to the technical skills and specialised machinery required for the project and the materials available or within reach.

E Maintenance

MPU will **NOT** assist communities, which do not maintain their **infrastructure**. The application must indicate that there is a functioning maintenance committee, which has some resources and has evidence that it has done some maintenance works. If not, then the project is rejected and the community advised accordingly.

If a proposed project satisfies fully and convincingly, with evidence, **EACH** of the above criteria then the project is **RECOMMENDED** for field appraisal.

If a project **FAILS** to satisfy **ANY ONE** of the above criteria, then it is **REJECTED**.

The District Appraisal Committee members may organise a visit to those communities whose projects have been rejected to assist them to reappraise their situation and discuss alternative strategies and solutions.

4.2.2 FIELD APPRAISAL

Projects approved at desk appraisal are then subjected to a **Field Appraisal visit** before any recommendation for funding is made. The District Planning Officer (DPO), district officer in charge of the sector, a technical officer and a member of staff from the PPU usually attend with the MPU Regional Coordinator. An appraisal form is filled in at the end of the field appraisal.

The main objectives of the field appraisal are to find out if this project is a priority for the community and how they are going to achieve their aims.

To do this the appraisal team members:

- Assess community capacity and commitment;
- Assess if Project Meets a Priority Need for the Majority of the Community;
- Agree Targets and Appropriate Community Contribution;

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- Assess skills, complexity, scope, time, size and costs of project;
- Assess the quality and quantity of Community Contribution ;
- Undertake a Technical Appraisal ;
- Decide if project requires contractors and consultants¹;
- Develop a Community Action Plan;
- Inform the community of MPU/GRZ conditions; and
- Elect and Confirm a Project Committee which should have at least **50% women** as its members

Projects which do not meet the requirement of a 25% community contribution are either rejected at this stage or referred back to the community for an increased contribution.

4.2.3 MPU HEAD OFFICE REVIEW

The field appraisal reports are submitted to MPU Head Office where recommendations by the appraisal team are checked by a committee of senior MPU staff. Projects recommended for funding are passed to the Technical Section for the preparation of budgets. Budgets are based on bills of quantities of materials and details of labour, transport and furniture and equipment requirements. Detailed budgets are prepared for each individual project target based on the information obtained by the district team at field appraisal.

4.2.4 MPU STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee is the final decision-making body along the path of project approval. It also reviews the management operations of the MPU and advises on government policy issues. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of EDBD and its members are representatives of GRZ line Ministries, members of the donor and NGO community and other specialised agencies. It meets every three months, usually February, May, August and November. The new project proposals are submitted to the Steering Committee members every month for consideration. A time period of 10 days is given from the time of submission for members to study the proposals. Projects are then deemed approved on “absence of objection” at the expiry of this time period.

4.3 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

4.3.1 Following the formal approval of a project proposal, a **Financing Agreement** is prepared. The Financing Agreement includes a summary of the **budget** and an outline of the **responsibilities of the various parties** involved in implementing the project. It is accompanied by a **detailed budget** showing the quantity and estimated price of materials, labour, transport and furniture and equipment for each project component.

¹ If contractors may be used, special guidelines are available from the District and MPU Regional Office “*MPU-Ensuring Sustainable Development Through Community Participation*”

4.3.2 Project Launch Workshops

Project Launch Workshops are conducted for every approved project. These are timed to take place after the community has received its Financing Agreement but **before it is signed**. The Project Launch Workshop informs the community on all aspects of their project. The District Officers and MPU Regional Coordinator facilitate the Project Launch Workshop. The activities are:

- Informing community on agreements;
- Confirm Project Components, Activities or Targets and Contributions;
- Agree Work Programme;
- Agree and Understand Financing Agreement;
- Confirm Committees, Roles and Understand obligations of all Players;
- Facilitate On the Job Training;
- Assess Technical Supervisors.

No funds are released until a successful project launch workshop has been conducted.

4.3.3 Disbursement of Funds

Funds are disbursed directly to the beneficiary community and only commences once the Project Committee has opened a **bank account, solely for the project's use**, and a copy of the Financing Agreement, signed by all parties concerned, has been received by the MPU.

The **disbursement of funds** normally involves four instalments:

- an advance equivalent to **36%** of the MPU contribution;
- second and third allocations each of **24%** of the total MPU contribution;
- a final payment of the balance of **16%**.

Each successive instalment is paid only after justification of 75 % of the previous instalment and 100% of all instalments before that.

Financial reports, with the relevant supporting documents, including proformas, price comparative forms, receipts, Local Purchase Orders and payment vouchers, are sent by the project committee to MPU and are used to account for the advances made to projects. This is the justification process.

4.3.4 Monitoring

The more a project is monitored, the community encouraged and given the opportunity to discuss problems, the more motivated the community, the faster the project will finish and the better the final project. **Quarterly monitoring visits** to each project are conducted by the MPU Regional Co-ordinators, Provincial Planning Units and District Team members. The District Officers also aim to visit the projects once a month. The monitoring team checks expenditure against physical progress, technical quality of the project and community involvement. The monitoring team members also :

- Encourage and motivate the community;
- Assess community commitment ;

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- Assess management of resources;
- Assess physical progress and quality;
- Identify problems and assist community to solve problems;
- Give on the job training including technical training in implementation and maintenance.

4.3.5 Completion and Closure

When all the project targets are completed to the satisfaction of the community, MPU and district officers, and all advances have been fully justified, a **Completion Certificate** is issued.

Projects may be closed incomplete if :

- the project becomes seriously behind schedule;
- community participation and contribution is not forthcoming in the agreed quantity and quality nor at the agreed time;
- project management is poor;
- there is any financial irregularity.

The District Team, the MPU and the PPU makes every effort to facilitate the solution to problems. If agreed solutions are not implemented, then the project may be closed. Problem projects are a liability to the MPU as they drain valuable resources which could be better used by other needy communities.

5. ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

5.1 Community

The ‘community’ includes all those who are interested and involved in the project, who are prepared to participate and who will benefit from the services provided by the project. The community OWN their project. The community role is to initiate the project, implement and manage the project, complete and maintain the project.

Specifically the role of the community is as follows:

Identify the problem and initiate the project

- discuss and prioritise their problems;
- hold meetings and keep records of meetings;
- seek assistance, information and guidance from district staff.

Formulate plans and organise

- consider alternative ways of solving problems;
- consider available resources - materials, labour, skills;
- discuss and agree plans;
- agree on who does what, when and how;
- select committee members which include women.

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Implement, Manage and Monitor the Project

- ❑ collect local materials;
- ❑ organise and manage skilled and unskilled labour;
- ❑ procure bought materials following recognised procurement procedures and agreed material schedules;
- ❑ manage the stores efficiently;
- ❑ account for money;
- ❑ hire transport;
- ❑ ensure project is efficiently implemented;
- ❑ hold regular meetings to review process;
- ❑ seek assistance when necessary.

Complete and Maintain Project

- ❑ discuss experiences, success, failures and what next;
- ❑ make a maintenance plan;
- ❑ ensure an effective maintenance committee is in place;
- ❑ undertake preventative and condition based maintenance.

The role of MPU, Provincial and District and sub district staff is to FACILITATE these processes.

5.2 District Teams

The District Team, which includes District Planning Officers, Technical Officers, District Line Department staff, District Council staff, forms the vital link between the community and the assistance available through MPU. The MPU have trained the District Teams in MPU procedures and principles, facilitation and technical skills in order that they may effectively fulfil their roles which are:

to assist communities to prepare and plan their projects by informing the community:

- ❑ what it takes to undertake a project- time, effort, money, sacrifice, community involvement and organisation, meetings, typical community contributions;
- ❑ sector policies - what will not be approved -e.g. completely new clinics, schools;
- ❑ how projects are approved - what can happen next, why it might be rejected;
- ❑ necessity of maintenance - if no maintenance, no project.

to facilitate project desk appraisals at least once a quarter;

- ❑ apply the 5 criteria and recommend or reject projects;
- ❑ inform communities, DDCC and other interested parties of the outcome of the meeting;
- ❑ arrange field visits.

to facilitate project field appraisals

- ❑ assess community capacity, commitment and contribution;
- ❑ facilitate agreement of scope of project according to capacity, appropriate technology and sector policy considerations;
- ❑ assist the community to organise itself and plan its project;

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- collect relevant detailed information for budget purposes;
- inform of MPU procedures.

to facilitate Project Launch workshops

- confirm targets and community and MPU contributions;
- assist project planning;
- facilitate understanding of financing agreements, plans, schedules etc.;
- assess Technical Supervisors;
- facilitate on the job training.

to undertake regular project monitoring

- assess physical progress, quality of works, management of resources (materials, money, labour and technical supervision), community commitment;
- identify problems and assist community to solve these problems;
- give on the job training where necessary;
- encourage the community.

**to report to DDCC members, MPU and other interested parties;
to incorporate MPU projects in district plans.**

5.3 Provincial Planning Units

MPU Regional Co-ordinators work closely with Provincial Planning Units to ensure that projects are in line with national and sector policies and that projects are included in provincial plans. The specific role of PPU in the MPU project cycle is as follows:

- Provide information on national and sector policy
- Participate in and facilitate project desk appraisals
- Participate in and facilitate project field appraisals
- Recommend projects for funding
- Participate and facilitate project launch workshops
- Participate and facilitate in project monitoring visits
- Report on MPU activities where necessary.

5.4 MPU Regional Officers

MPU Regional Officers represent the MPU in dealings with provincial and district GRZ staff, with district councils and with NGOs. They work with PPU and District staff in the facilitation of development programmes funded by the MPU.

The responsibilities of the Regional Officers may be summarised as follows:

- Provide information about MPU to communities, NGOs, District staff and any others interested in community based development;
- Ensure that application forms are available to all interested parties;
- Facilitate District Desk appraisals on a regular basis;
- Facilitate project field appraisals;
- Facilitate project launch workshops

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- Facilitate monitoring of on-going projects
- Facilitate additional supervision and monitoring visits where required;
- Ensure Completion Certificates are issued to finished projects;
- Submit quarterly reports to the Provincial Permanent Secretary and MPU Head Office;
- Participate in PDCC and Provincial Task Force Meetings
- Liaise with Provincial Permanent Secretary and PPU regularly.

5.5 Non Governmental Organisations

Although the MPU welcome NGO's applying on behalf of communities, we ask for evidence that the communities have been consulted and that the project being applied for meets a priority need of that community. The MPU asks for evidence that the project will be 'owned' by the community, rather than the NGO, and that the community have agreed to maintain the project after it is completed. The NGO **MUST** be in a position to provide expert assistance to the communities.

The role of NGOs could be :

- facilitation of participatory planning, project preparation, community organisation and management of resources, especially for remote and poor communities;
- coordination of several similar community based projects; and
- technical skills transfer.

The MPU expects the NGO to be in a position to supply detailed budgets and work programmes for all the work involved. The NGO should include in the proposal exactly what the NGO input will be, who will provide that input, when it will take place and estimated cost of that input, as well as submit standard MPU application forms from **each** community. The proposal should show that the NGO has the relevant skills to undertake its proposed role.

The proposal should be submitted to the District Planning Officer as well as the MPU Regional Office. The desk and field appraisal teams will consider the NGO submissions. During the field appraisal the appraisal team will also appraise the NGO input. Finally the NGO cost estimates will be discussed and agreed between the NGO and MPU head office. The NGO costs will be presented to the Steering Committee as part of the project proposal presented for approval.

The NGO **MUST** be registered and have audited accounts.

MICROPROJECTS UNIT
DIRECTORY FOR REGIONAL OFFICERS AS AT 1 JANUARY 2001

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